

CHRISTIAN STRESS MANAGEMENT
"Part II: Escaping Stress' Taxing Roller-Coaster"
(Genesis 3:1-7; 1 John 2:14b,15-17)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) Dave Dravecky, a Believer in Christ, always loved and lived for baseball. The first word he ever said was "ball," and pitching shaped his growing up years.

In the 1980s, his performances in several championship games showed that he was a determined winner. He made it to the major leagues, playing as a starter for the San Francisco Giants.

Then doctors removed 50 percent of his throwing arm's deltoid muscle in 1988. Doctors told Dave that it would be miraculous if he ever pitched again.

On August 10, 1989, Dave Dravecky "made headlines by pitching seven innings of shutout baseball for the San Francisco Giants." He felt on top of the world, that God had restored him to his former pitching position as a testimony.

But five days later, as Dave was pitching in another game, the upper bone in his arm loudly snapped, breaking in two, and Dave ended up in a writhing heap on the mound, his pitching career suddenly over. Many questions went through Dave's mind. "What was God doing? The arm had been tested in several minor-league games. Why didn't it break then? Why had God allowed him to have such a glorious comeback, if it would end in a snap?"

Soon his cancerous arm was amputated. In the end, Dave Dravecky battled his biggest foe -- depression! WHY DID IT ALL HAVE TO HAPPEN THIS WAY?! (This story appeared in the Republican-American, August 9, 1994 issue.)

(2) Dave Dravecky's experience on the mound that August day in 1989 mirrors what so many other fellow believers experience -- a roller-coaster of going in and out and back into a stressful mindset. We know that we must trust the Lord, look to the Lord for victory over depression and pain -- but we go up only to come back down, and continually see-saw back and forth! WHY?!

(We turn to the "Need" section in the message . . .)

Need: "Sure, applying Scripture rescues me from being stressed, but I need to get off the taxing roller-coaster of going in-and-out of a tense state of mind! It's wearing me out!! Any ideas?!"

- I. **It is God's will for us to live without being stressed, Jn. 16:33!**
- II. **To understand how to avoid stress, we review its causes :**
 - A. When God created the world, humans had no stress, Gen. 1:27-31.
 - B. However, the following stressful human experiences in Gen. 3:7-4:24 ruined man's stress-free state: fear of personal appearance, 3:7; guilt, 3:8-19; marital problems, 3 :7,12; 4:19; anxiety between man and snakes, 3:15; family abuse, murder, 4:8; homelessness, 4:16 (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, ftn.); and communal crime, 4:23-24 with 4:17.
 - C. Since there is only one event in history before Genesis 3:7 that could have ruined God's stress-free environment, and since that event occurs in Genesis 3:1-6, we view it to discover the **roots** of human stress:
 1. Genesis 3:1-5 introduces Satan who **deceived** Eve to "**soften her up**" so that she would sin by eating the forbidden fruit!
 2. Genesis 3:6 shows the world luring Eve to sin AFTER that deception: she fell for the lust of the body, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, all which are part of the world system today, Gen. 3:6a, b, c with 1 John 2:16a, b, c.
 3. Genesis 3:7 exposes the origin of a sin nature in man which came from the Genesis 3:6 disobedience (Gal. 5:19-21); this nature also creates stress if unchecked, Rom. 5:12; 7:15-24!
- III. **Since the cause of stress is the world, the sin nature and the devil, we can avoid stress by defeating these foes as follows:**
 - A. The believer **FIRST** defeats the foe of his sinful nature to avoid stress **before he can tackle his other foes**:
 1. One must have the Holy Spirit control him or be ruled by his sin nature and be too weak to tackle the devil **or** the world system, Rom. 8:3-4 with Rom. 7:15-24.
 2. Control by the Spirit is the result of (a) **receiving** Him by faith in Christ for salvation, Jn. 1:11-12 (b) followed by confession of sin (1 J. 1:9) **when** one later sins, (c) followed in turn by trusting in the Holy Spirit to rule one's actions, Ga. 5:16ff!
 - B. His **SECOND** conquering effort to avoid stress should be aimed at overcoming Satanic temptations:

1. 1 John 2:14b-17 is directed at moderately mature believers, cf. Mitchell, Fellowship: Three Letters From John, p. 65-70.
 2. They have overcome Satan **THOUGH THEY HAVE NOT YET OVERCOME THE** world, 1 Jn. 2:14b versus 2:15! Since Eve was deceived by Satan before heeding the world (cf. 1 T. 2:14 with Gen. 3:1-6), one cannot discern between the innocent fulfillment of human needs and heeding evil worldly lusts unless he first conquers Satanic deception!
 3. Believers conquer Satan's temptations as follows:
 - a. They become strong, 1 J. 2:14b. This enabling results from the control of the Spirit for power in life (cf. "III, A" above and Ep. 6:12ff & Isa. 59:16f) and service (2 Tim. 2:1; 1:6-14)!
 - b. Thus enabled, they neutralize Satan's strong deception that Eve faced by using Scripture under the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit, 1 Jn. 2:14c & 1 C. 2:11, 15!
- C. His **THIRD** mastery to avoid stress is overcoming the world:
1. Heeding the lure of the world creates constant stress as this entity cannot furnish the fulfillment it advertises, 1 Jn. 2:17a!
 2. John's direction for handling this stress source comes **AFTER** (a) we are strong in handling the sin nature **and** (b) we have overcome Satan's deception by using Scripture, 1 J. 2:14-15.
 3. Believers **then** offset the **world's** appeal to avoid its fruits of stress by trusting God eternally to bless their current obedience; thus motivated, they practice God's will, 1 J. 2:17!

Lesson Application: *To escape the taxing roller-coaster ride of going in-and-out of stress, (1) believe on Christ for salvation from sin to qualify as being in Christ to avoid stress, Jn. 3:16 with 16:33. (2) Then, tackle the sin nature, the devil and the world as described above! (3) If we still struggle on a stress roller-coaster, we are trying to attack these three stress roots in the wrong order! (a) The believer is powerless unless controlled by the Spirit, Rom. 8:3a, so he must defeat his sin nature first or he lacks God's power base to tackle the devil, 1 Jn. 2:14b! (b) Satan can deceive him into confusing worldliness with meeting innocent needs of the body, aesthetic appeal and honor, so it is useless for him even to try to define -- let alone tackle -- the world without first defeating Satan, 1 Jn. 2:14b-15a! (c) Thus, if still vacillating between stress and peace, correct the wrong order we are using to overcome our three stress roots!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the solution . . .)

(1) Nancy Otto Boffo's testimony is in this month's Moody Monthly on page 64, and it precisely fits our lesson: When her 18 year old sister, Ellen, lost both of her kidneys so that she had to live on artificial life support systems, Nancy hung up the phone from receiving the news just to scream, "Where are You, God? Why did You let this happen to Ellen? How could You let **both** her kidneys fail?"

Nancy was amazed at Ellen's response. Ellen went to college, got a part-time job, and enjoyed her life along with its routine dialysis treatments. Nancy asked Ellen how she could stand life this way. Ellen responded, "It's simple. I've accepted Jesus into my life as my Lord and Savior. I'm a new person inside" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Nancy and her husband, Mike decided to attend an evangelical church to get Ellen's peaceful attitude over life's stress. But the lack of peace continued to hound her. One Sunday, Nancy cornered the Sunday school teacher, Jody, and asked, "Jody, . . . We've joined the church and are working on different committees, but I still don't have the feeling of peace and joy you always talk about. Tell me how to get it." Jody responded that Nancy needed to receive Christ into her life by faith apart from all sorts of church activities.

Nancy did just that, and the peace to handle life's stresses came to be hers. She testifies: "I've experienced some tough times in the 10 years since. The most difficult was when I was in the hospital for eight weeks before our daughter's premature birth. By leaning on Christ, I found the strength I needed to keep a positive attitude and get through a frightening situation. While I was hospitalized, . . . the love of Christ shown through the actions of the Sunday school class affected Mike, and he also committed his life to Christ . . . Knowing I have Christ to turn to has enabled me to persevere during troubling times . . ."

(2) As for Dave Dravecky, the baseball pitcher with an amputated, cancerous arm, he has gained victory over his pain and started the Dave Dravecky Foundation in Colorado Springs to minister to troubled Christians who find it difficult to fight long-term, stressful problems!

We stay out of stress (a) by getting saved, (b) and then, as believers under the Spirit's control, by overcoming Satan's deception and the world's lure in that order!